

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Mayor David J. Narkewicz  
City of Northampton, Massachusetts  
Tuesday, January 3, 2012

Good morning and thank you.

Judge Connly, Reverend Ayvazian, Mr. Clark, District Attorney Sullivan, Mayor Cramer, Mayor Ford, Mayor Higgins, Council President Dostal and other former Councilors and city officials, fellow elected officials, other distinguished guests, and my fellow citizens.

I am honored and humbled to stand before you as the 44<sup>th</sup> Mayor of the City of Northampton.

I want to begin by thanking the people of this community for allowing me the opportunity and privilege to lead our city. I also want to thank the men and women who worked on my campaign and the hundreds of volunteers who helped and supported me in the election.

I want to acknowledge former Council President Michael Bardsley and his supporters for their work and participation in the electoral process. The campaign was long, and at times, heated, but I never doubted Michael's commitment to the City of Northampton. I extend my hand to him and his supporters with a pledge to govern as the Mayor for every member of this community.

I want to pay special tribute to our former Mayor, Mary Clare Higgins, who served Northampton as a Housing Authority Commissioner, City Councilor At-Large, Council President, and Mayor for more than 20 years. Mayor Higgins guided our city through some of its most challenging economic times while maintaining Northampton's place as one of the best cities in Massachusetts and America. I know I speak for our entire community when I say thank you, Clare, for your tireless and dedicated service to this city.

My mom, Madeline Narkewicz, was unable to be here today, but I thank her and my late father, Joe Narkewicz, for laying the foundations of love, family, work ethic, and community service without which I would not be standing before you today. My sisters Terry and Mary are here representing my mom and siblings.

Finally, I want to thank my own family: my wife Yelena and daughters Emma and Zoe. They stood with me on the front steps of our home when I announced my candidacy last March, they stood with me this morning when I took the oath of office, and they've stood with me every moment in between throughout this incredible journey. I love you more than anything and thank you for allowing your husband and father to take on this new role serving our city.

And if JFK Principal Wilson is here or watching on television, the girls will be a little late for school today...

Northampton is a great place to live, work, learn, run a business, and raise a family.

I think I saw a few lips moving in the audience as I delivered that line because it's one I probably said hundreds of times over the last year. I know Yelena was probably hearing it in her sleep after sitting through so many of my speeches and debates.

But you know what – it's true. Northampton is a great city.

It's the reason we all live here. It's the reason you are all here this morning to bear witness to this newly inaugurated government. It's the reason I and these men and women are all on this stage poised to serve the community we all love and call home.

We have much to be proud of. Distinctive neighborhoods, both rural and urban. Beautiful vistas and open spaces juxtaposed with vibrant, humming downtowns. Rich farmland and an equally rich culture of arts and music. A strong core of successful, locally-owned businesses and core commitments to education, the environment, and social justice.

And probably our most valuable local resource: thousands of talented, civic-minded residents, generations of whom have helped build this city through hard work, commitment, and sacrifice.

But we are not without big challenges. Northampton, like other cities and towns across the Commonwealth and nation, has had to grapple with difficult economic times, tight budgets, and ever-shrinking support from the state and federal government.

A report issued last month by the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation notes that in fiscal 2010 and 2011 cities and towns endured the most difficult two-year period in 30 years. "We are entering a new period in which there will be a permanent squeeze on municipal finances," the report states. "For the foreseeable future, year-to-year revenue growth will be constrained, outpaced by the growth in personnel costs and liabilities."

It is against this backdrop that we must be willing to take a fresh look at how we do all of the things city government needs to do for our citizens. This is not change for change sake, but a necessary willingness to look at old problems anew and find creative new solutions.

Northampton has managed to navigate these difficult times in no small measure because of the strong support of this community for preserving our city services and investing in the future. Over the last three consecutive years – during tough economic times – the voters have overwhelmingly supported three tax measures: a general operating override for city government and our schools, a debt-exclusion to build a new police station to meet our current and future public safety needs, and the ratification of the CPA to allow us to preserve and enhance affordable housing, our history, recreation and open space.

I am proud of our community for rallying around this city, but I also recognize that to move forward in these challenging economic times we must think outside the box to be able to do more with the limited resources we have.

Our department heads and employees work hard every day to serve the public and my goal is to provide our team with the tools to work more efficiently and with better results. To help us deliver smarter and more cost-effective services, I will introduce a program in Northampton for collecting and analyzing data about key city functions and services.

CitiStat is a performance-based municipal management system pioneered by the City of Baltimore, Maryland and successfully adopted by cities around the country including here in Massachusetts by Amesbury, Newton, and Somerville.

By collecting and analyzing key data involving city operations and finance on everything from the number of overtime hours logged to the number of potholes filled, I believe we can identify cost savings, find more efficient ways of delivering services, and most importantly, provide more information and accountability to the tax payers.

Northampton residents should know and expect that their tax dollars are being spent wisely, efficiently, and for the greatest benefit to the community.

We'll start small (and at modest expense) by training key members of our financial team in the CitiStat process and launching a limited pilot program. I will have more to say about this project as it is developed.

I also intend to institute a fresh approach to our municipal budgeting process this spring. Within the next 100 days, I will schedule a series of town hall budget meetings to talk about the challenges we'll be facing with our city finances and ask residents for input and ideas to provide guidance as I work with our department heads and their staffs to craft a budget for the new fiscal year that begins July 1<sup>st</sup>.

It's also my goal to infuse more financial data and analysis into my first budget so there's more line-item detail about the functions and services of our various departments.

Finally, our city has made significant strides in consolidating departmental functions and eliminating unnecessary duplication of services over the last several years. We've also been successful in regionalizing functions like Veterans Services and Health Inspections. I am committed to finding more opportunities for streamlining our government and collaborating with neighboring communities.

We are a community with a lot of shared values, shared beliefs, and one where we know our neighbors and we look out for them. When citizen help or involvement is needed, Northampton residents can be counted on to step to the plate and be there for their neighbors.

When the Veterans Council of Northampton wanted to send local World War II and Korean War vets on an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., our community opened up their hearts and their wallets and Tom Pease's dream of a "Tribute Tour" became reality.

When a massive October snowstorm left a trail of downed trees and limbs in its wake, we put out the call to volunteers and over the course of two weekends city residents, city councilors, DPW workers, and Smith Voke students worked shoulder to shoulder to help our neighbors clean up.

Whenever our schools need help or support, volunteers from our PTOs, VINS, Dollars for Scholars, or the Northampton Education Foundation always answer the call. These are just some of the ways we join together in shared purpose to benefit the community as a whole.

As Mayor, I want to marshal that community spirit and the incredible energy and talents of people all across our city to find innovative ideas and common sense solutions to meet the challenges of the next decade.

Throughout the campaign, I talked about the importance of fostering citizen participation in city government. I stated I would form citizen advisory teams made up of people from across the city—whether they supported me or not – to get our community working together to review and think about the ways government, in this era of fiscal and financial contraction, can do things more efficiently and effectively.

I have identified three areas so far where advisory committees will be formed in the first 100 days of my administration and asked to make recommendations that can change how we conduct our public business.

The first will be an Economic Development Advisory Commission to help us develop an overall strategy for economic development and how we can better position our city to attract new business. This effort is particularly timely as our city's first economic development coordinator leaves for another position creating an opportunity to reevaluate this critical function.

Supporting our existing local businesses while attracting more businesses to locate and grow here will result in enhanced job opportunities for residents and greater tax revenues for the community, all worthwhile goals.

A Rail Advisory Committee will be charged with analyzing short and long-term planning for the return of rail service to our community and look at the possibility of establishing a multi-modal transportation center in the city to consolidate all forms of transportation.

Thirdly, I will establish a website and information technology advisory committee to look at the city's web pages and overall I.T. infrastructure to make recommendations for improving and upgrading them.

We must ensure that our city's website remains an effective tool for providing information to residents and visitors while exploring new technology for improving the ways citizens communicate with city government. Smart use of technology will lead to smarter government, cost savings, and better services.

Of course, there is a significant list of other challenges over the next two years that require our collective community attention:

We must ensure that Northampton remains a place where people of all income levels can live and work.

We must make much-needed capital investments in roads and sidewalks, vehicles and facilities, and other vital public infrastructure.

We need a plan for disposing of our trash responsibly and affordably when the landfill closes this year.

We must further Northampton's leadership role as a green community: protecting our environment, advancing energy conservation, and sustaining our resources.

We need to provide top-notch public safety and keep our streets safe for cars, cyclists, and pedestrians.

And, underpinning all of this, we need to make the best decisions about these and other public policies while ensuring that our government is open, fair, and transparent.

I know I cannot address these issues alone, which is why I am committed to ensuring a strong working relationship with our City Council and other elected and appointed officials. In these challenging times, we need to act together to find solutions to the issues that confront us. I look forward to collaborating with all of you to serve the needs of our constituents.

I also look forward to working with my School Committee colleagues and Superintendent Brian Salzer to keep our schools strong and vibrant. I am the Mayor, but I'm also the parent of two kids in the Northampton Public Schools. I know how important our schools are not only for all of our kids' futures but also for the overall social and economic strength of our community.

This includes Smith Agricultural and Vocational High School and my role working with my fellow Trustees and Superintendent Arthur Apostolou to sustain its proud tradition of outstanding career-oriented instruction for students throughout our region.

And, finally, I intend to reach out to the men and women who work for our city government –not just department heads but the people providing services on the front line: teachers, firefighters, police officers, dispatchers, DPW workers, custodians, clerical staff. I want to understand their work and hear their ideas and solutions.

I also recognize and appreciate that our hard-working employees have been asked to make financial sacrifices over the last few years in order to avert layoffs and allow Northampton to maintain vital services. I am committed to working with our employees to find a way to reverse that trend.

While I've mentioned many issues and concerns that we will be addressing over the next two years, those of us on this stage cannot do the work in a vacuum by ourselves. We need the participation, ideas, opinions, and involvement of residents throughout our city for progress to occur.

Once again, I want to thank the people of Northampton for entrusting me with this office.

We live in a remarkable community, and I am excited about the opportunity to build on our success and make it even better. Please know that as your Mayor, I will work hard every day to unite our city and find solutions to the challenges that lie ahead.

Now it's time for all of us to roll up our sleeves, work together, and move this great city forward.

Thank you.